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SUBJECT: ANAMBRA UPDATE - JANUARY 30, 2004

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Anambra - New twists in the continuing crisis

1. (U) The crisis of the Governor vs. the "godfather" continues to grind on in Anambra State. There have been accusations that the GON, namely President Olusegun Obasanjo, is doing nothing to bring peace and order to Anambra, and, in fact, may be the main force stirring up trouble for Governor Chris Ngige. Possibly in response to those charges, Senate President Adolphus Wabara has attempted to broker a truce between Ngige and his "godfather", millionaire Chris Uba. Wabara brought the two opponents together twice, in December and last week, along with Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) officials, prominent members of the Igbo community and local traditional rulers. The result of these meetings was the so-called "Owerri Peace Accords", reported to be heavily weighted in Uba's favor, but which allowed Ngige to remain in office.

2. (U) Neither side respected the agreement. Uba immediately got a friend on the high court in Enugu State to issue an order ousting Ngige from office. The Ngige faction persuaded the Appeals Court to reverse the Enugu court and the Governor celebrated by choosing his own Deputy Governor -- in contravention of the "Peace Accords" which had given Uba the right to pick the Deputy Governor. Meanwhile, back in the Senate, Wabara was swearing in a hand-picked "Implementation Committee" for the "Peace Accords."

3. (U) All parties are behaving as if the crisis has been resolved in their respective favors. The Inspector General of Police, Tafa Balogun, continues to resist all demands that he restore Ngige's police bodyguard that was taken from him by the Enugu court order. Ngige travels around Anambra and Abuja with private bodyguards and is much photographed doing his gubernatorial duties -- handing out prizes at high schools, attending important weddings and funerals, appointing his cabinet. Sometimes, he drives himself because he doesn't trust anyone to do it for him. Yesterday, his armored car reportedly broke down. Uba, after a short vacation abroad, is back pulling strings and, allegedly, attempting to pay off federal legislators to get them to declare a state of emergency in Anambra and put him in power. There are new players and court decisions every day and no final resolution in sight.

Anambra - Police action: good, bad and otherwise

4. (U) Inspector General Balogun announced January 27 the discovery of a large cache of illegal guns in the huge and sprawling Onitsha market. The guns were discovered during the capture of six men described as burglars and two others said to be "arms dealers." Along with the guns, police discovered blank gun license forms and blank Nigerian international passports. A police spokesman told the Guardian newspaper that the police are not yet certain what the guns and official forms were being stockpiled for, but that "it was generally believed that they might be intended for no good." Balogun issued a statement praising the Anambra police units and in the same statement said that his new program to fight corruption in the police force had resulted in the firing or prosecution for corruption of almost 900 policemen nationwide. Sixty-five will be tried for extorting money ("dash") from motorists. The saga continues.

HINSON-JONES